



# AROUND THE HOUSE

## Introducing: Wichita Housing & Community Services Department

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The start of 2005 brings a fresh perspective and new identity to housing services in Wichita. As of January 1, 2005, the Housing Services Department will be known as the

### Housing and Community Services Department.

This new name is not the only thing that has changed. In addition to Public Housing, Section 8, HOME-ownership 80 and home repair programs, the newly named department will be responsible for the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** program. The City Manager announced this change in December, as part of several changes he is making in City government.

One of the good things about this change in name and program scope, is it does not change the department's mission. In fact, it makes the mission even more meaningful and easier to achieve.



The **Community Development Block Grant** is a Federal funding source which Wichita and other cities use to "develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low to moderate income persons".

In Wichita, CDBG funds are used to fund home repairs, streets, curbs & gutters, environmental health inspectors, and social services programs for adults and youth. The staff who oversee the CDBG program, also administer business loan programs.

The new Housing and Community Services Department will continue to meet CDBG program objectives and also enhance the mission of the department—in a comprehensive manner.

The department is pleased to welcome CDBG staff, Marty Miller, Rhonda Harper and Jennifer Allen, to the Housing and Community Services Department. The addition of staff and programs will result in 2005 being a Very Happy New Year for housing and community

### Inside this issue:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Director's Chair</i>                     | 2 |
| <i>HUD Service and Satisfaction Survey</i>  | 2 |
| <i>Section 8 Automation</i>                 | 3 |
| <i>Landlord Rent Payment Schedule</i>       | 3 |
| <i>Section 3 Employment Reminder</i>        | 3 |
| <i>Earned Income Tax Credit Information</i> | 3 |
| <i>Winterizing Your Home</i>                | 4 |

### Housing and Community Services Department Mission

... to provide housing  
and related services  
to benefit the citizens  
and neighborhoods of  
Wichita

## Milestones



The City of Wichita has been notified that on January 18, 2005, it will receive the HUD

### "Door Knocker Award"



for the Millair Creek Housing development project. This project is funded under the Federal HOME program, for the construction of new homes for new homebuyers. To celebrate the HOME program's 15th year, outstanding HOME-funded projects are being recognized with this award. Staff will travel to Washington D.C. in January for this national recognition. In addition to receiving the award, the Millair Creek project (and local officials) is featured in a 15th anniversary video on the HOME program.

### Construction update!

The construction project to enlarge the Housing & Community Services Office at 332 N. Riverview is well underway. The mild December weather has enabled the crews to get ahead of schedule so it may be complete before May, 2005. Everyone is encouraged to continue to pay attention to signage to ensure your safety in the construction area.

## From the Director's Chair

Mary K. Vaughn



In January, 2004, I became the Housing Services Director for the City of Wichita. Shortly thereafter I shared with the Around the House audience, some of my goals. As I come to the end of my first year here, I decided to prepare an update on those goals.

I mentioned that I wanted to highlight our successes. In addition to the Door Knocker award mentioned in this newsletter I have shared with the Mayor, Council and Housing Advisory Board, other distinctions such as being the number one HOME program

in the state of Kansas. This goal will continue because I expect our successes to grow as well.

I also indicated an interest in looking at other successful housing and neighborhood initiatives for ideas we could adapt to Wichita. One such example is my recent visit to an Omaha homeless shelter which is now being considered as a model for addressing Wichita's homeless population.

The third of my short list of goals was to solicit and listen to input from the housing community. I have done

that as well, and based on what I have heard, have plans for program modifications to address community concerns, such as those related to home repair loans.

As we move into 2005 those goals will continue and will have others added to them. But they will all be designed to realize our mission ... *to provide housing and related services to benefit the citizens and neighborhoods of Wichita.*

## South City & Country Acres Facelifts

-Tom Byler

The Housing Administrative offices are not the only structures under construction this year. Residents' homes are being upgraded as well!

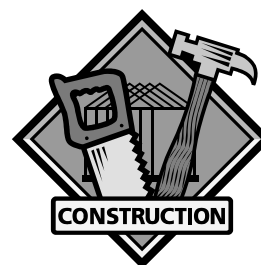
Funded by the HUD Capital Fund Grant, Public Housing staff will be completing a new chain-link fence project for 45 houses in the South City Public Housing Development on the 1500 and 1600 blocks of Berkley, Catalina and Del Mar this winter. The new fencing will be plastic coated and have concrete mowing strips. The sidewalks and driveways were replaced in 2001. The fencing will be

the final stage of exterior renovations in the South City Development and should be a great improvement to the general neighborhood.

Another winter project is the completion of exterior renovations at the Country Acres Public Housing Development involving the replacement of sidewalks and driveways on 28 houses located on Frazier, Freeman and Summitlawn streets. Not only will the new sidewalks be safer, but also the new driveways will be wider and will provide ample space to walk around vehicles while they are parked in the

driveway. New fencing was installed last summer in this development.

The cost of the two winter projects will approach nearly \$200,000. The Public Housing program continues to modernize the 349 single-family dwellings in its inventory with Capital Funds and continues to help make the surrounding neighborhoods better places to live.



## Automation Has Arrived at the Wichita Section 8 Office

- Gail Lotson

Staff of the Housing Services Department Section 8 Division is excited about the arrival of automated inspection equipment. Starting December 1, 2004, Section 8 Neighborhood Inspectors will use handheld inspection computers instead of the traditional clipboard, when they make their initial, annual, special, re-inspection and quality inspections. This electronic device (pictured here), will enable inspec-



tors to interface directly with the current inspection database and eliminate handwritten notes which have to be typed in later. The new system will also automatically schedule inspections and will generate written re-

ports for landlords and clients regarding results of the inspection, which will be mailed no later than the next business day. Clients and landlords can expect more efficient inspection services with this new system. The system was presented at the annual landlord meeting on November 5, 2004.

## Answer the Survey!



Public Housing residents are reminded to complete the HUD **Resident Service and Satisfaction surveys** which are being mailed. Remember—this is a tool that HUD will use to evaluate and assist housing authorities to improve their services. Surveys are being mailed to a sample of residents (everyone will not receive a survey). If you are one of the lucky ones to receive it, please complete it and follow the instructions to return the survey to HUD.

## CURRENT HAP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

| <i>Month</i>  | <i>Mail Date</i>  |
|---------------|-------------------|
| JANUARY 2005  | JANUARY 3, 2005   |
| FEBRUARY 2005 | JANUARY 28, 2005  |
| MARCH 2005    | FEBRUARY 25, 2005 |
| APRIL 2005    | MARCH 21, 2005    |
| MAY 2005      | APRIL 21, 2005    |
| JUNE 2005     | MAY 19, 2005      |

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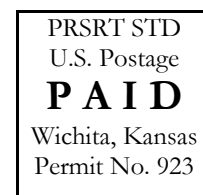
## Can You Use A Little Extra Money In 2005??

HUD and the IRS want to help Public Housing and Section 8 residents obtain the maximum amount of their 2004 Federal tax return. They recently announced that help will be available to low-income persons to file their taxes and claim Earned Income Tax Credits and Child Care Tax Credits. This could mean money back in your pocket!

According to a HUD report, last year more than 21 million families with 2 or more children, received tax refunds up to \$4,300 under the Earned Income Tax Credit program. The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is available to help more families receive these refunds.

To locate a VITA program site in Wichita, call: 1-800-829-1040.

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## Section 3 Employment Possibilities

-Mary K. Vaughn



Public Housing and Section 8 residents received letters in December, explaining the City's plan to prioritize certain jobs for residents and other low income persons and businesses in Wichita. This is part of the recently approved Section 3 Policy and Action Plan. The letters explained that residents who are interested in such employment possibilities should return the form

along with a resume or other documentation of skills and training. The Human Resources Department will receive copies of all information and will contact persons who responded, when there are job openings that match their interests and abilities. They will then have to complete a formal application.

Everyone was asked to respond, even if there is no interest in the program. If you haven't already, please return the forms—recruitment will begin early in the new year!